United Nations S/PV.8386*

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8386th meeting
Tuesday, 30 October 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Solíz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Woldegerima
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/264)

* Reissued for technical reasons 10 December 2018.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-34901 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)

Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/264)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The presidency has also received a request from the Russian Federation to invite Ms. Elena Kravchenko to participate in this meeting, in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Do I hear any objection to extending an invitation to Ms. Elena Kravchenko?

The representative of Sweden has asked for the floor.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Sweden, together with France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States, has asked that the situation in Ukraine be addressed in the Council today, with updates on the broader situation from the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in view of the upcoming so-called elections in what are misleadingly referred to as the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics, in eastern Ukraine.

We welcome the fact that Council members agreed to this briefing, which is now convened, as stated by the President, with reference both to the letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136) and the letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/264), without the formal creation of a new agenda item. The two agenda items remain separate and distinct, and future Security Council meetings can be held on each of them separately.

The so-called elections, to be held on 11 November, are being organized in violation of the Minsk agreements. The issue at hand is not about technicalities relating to the proposed elections but about holding the elections in the first place. The organization of those elections should be the result of the agreement of all parties, which is still being negotiated. The elections are an infringement on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and in breach of the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements. The suggested briefer does not represent the legal authorities or civil society of Ukraine. To allow the participation of a representative of an illegal separatist entity in a Council meeting would set a dangerous precedent. We therefore do not consider the briefer proposed by the Russian Federation competent to the purpose at hand, as stipulated in rule 39 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure. If the matter is put to a procedural vote, France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States will therefore oppose an invitation by the Council to the additional briefer proposed by the Russian Federation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is no secret to Council members that the idea of discussing the situation regarding the forthcoming elections in eastern Ukraine on 11 November came from six delegations — Sweden, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States and France. However, it occurred to none of them to invite the the people that the meeting is about, the representatives of the area, to participate in it. Furthermore, its initiators proposed holding it as a closed meeting so that they could then report to the media only on the elements that they wanted to.

We have long been familiar with these ways of working in the Security Council, and we condemn

such blatant examples of double standards. For reasons of transparency, therefore, we insisted on a public meeting and requested the participation of the heads of the central electoral commissions of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. We hope that the members of the Council are just as interested as we are in receiving complete information on the true state of affairs in Ukraine. We call on them not to submit to these delegations' pressure or to obstruct a briefing to the Council by the representative of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and parties to the Minsk agreements.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In the light of the comments made by Council members, I propose to put to the vote the proposal to extend an invitation under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Elena Kravchenko, in order to brief the Security Council under the agenda items entitled "Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)" and "Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/264)".

I shall put the proposal to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:
Russian Federation

Against:
France, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:
Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The proposal received one vote in favour, seven against and seven abstentions. The proposal to invite Ms. Elena Kravchenko has not been adopted, it having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: The previous Security Council meeting on the situation in Ukraine took place five months ago on 29 May (see S/PV.8270). As I stated then, the United Nations has been consistent in its strong support for the lead role of the Normandy Four, the Trilateral Contact Group, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other key actors to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Donbas. The Secretary-General has also repeatedly called for revitalizing efforts in those negotiation formats and bilateral channels. We therefore welcome presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12, of 6 June, which encouraged all the parties to recommit to the peace process, recalled the centrality of the Minsk agreements and urged scaled-up support for humanitarian efforts. We also note the 11 June meeting in the Normandy format, the first at the ministerial level in over a year. Despite those efforts, however, there has been little progress in talks to end the fighting. The conflict in eastern Ukraine, now in its fifth year, remains an active threat to international peace and security.

On the ground, continued and unpredictable escalations of hostilities aggravate the climate of insecurity and breed uncertainty about the parties' intentions. As negotiations on different tracks continue to search for points of convergence, effective implementation of any agreements is still lacking. It is noteworthy, nonetheless, that the incidence of violence this summer was the lowest of any equivalent period since the conflict broke out in 2014. The so-called harvest ceasefire and the back-to-school ceasefire — two recommitments to the ceasefire negotiated by the Trilateral Contact Group — were instrumental in reducing shelling and fire from small arms and light weapons, in turn resulting in the relatively low, although still tragic, figure of four civilian deaths from 1 June to 31 August. Clearly, with sufficient political will and genuine commitment to agreements, it is possible to stop the violence on the ground and drastically reduce the impact of the conflict on the civilian population. Regrettably, however, over the past six weeks, ceasefire violations have once again increased and casualty levels have risen. In September alone, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded 20 conflict-related civilian casualties. More than half of the civilian casualties in September were the result of mines or explosive remnants of war.

The United Nations continues to call on the parties to ensure the full and immediate implementation of the ceasefire agreements and exercise the utmost

restraint in order to protect the civilian population in the conflict-affected areas. The priority of the parties should be, without delay, to withdraw heavy weapons from populated areas, disengage forces and protect civilian infrastructure. The United Nations is also following reports of increased tensions in the Sea of Azov, which negatively affect the overall atmosphere in the region. We underline the need to avoid any risk of escalation, provocation or miscalculation.

The Minsk agreements, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2202 (2015), form the only agreed framework for a negotiated peace in eastern Ukraine. Echoing the Security Council's expectations, expressed through presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12, the United Nations calls for swift progress in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. We welcomed the most recent extension by the Ukrainian Parliament, on 4 October, of the law on special order regarding the local governance of certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, consistent with Ukraine's commitments under the Minsk agreements.

The United Nations urges all parties to avoid any unilateral steps that could deepen the divide or depart from the spirit and letter of the Minsk agreements. On 7 September, the de facto entities in Donetsk and Luhansk announced the holding of so-called leadership elections scheduled for 11 November. Despite Ukraine's objections, media report that preparations are still going ahead. As we understand, two separate ballots in both Donetsk and Luhansk are reportedly being planned — one for the Head of Republic and one for the People's Councils. Those will reportedly be voted in for terms of five years. I wish to recall that election-related matters are addressed in the Minsk agreements as part of a comprehensive package, and they are under consideration in the existing negotiating mechanisms. I therefore caution that any such measures, taken outside Ukraine's constitutional and legal framework, would be incompatible with the Minsk agreements.

On this occasion, I wish to acknowledge the tireless work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission on the ground in the face of extremely challenging conditions. I reiterate our call on all to ensure the safety and the freedom of movement of the monitors. As the Council will hear from Assistant Secretary-General Mueller, the human cost of the conflict for the people of Donbas continues to increase. The United Nations spares no effort to fulfil its responsibilities in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the monitoring of human rights. It is essential, however, that that role not be politicized or instrumentalized by any side.

It is time for renewed and constructive action by all concerned to overcome the apparent impasse in diplomatic negotiations. The United Nations underlines the need to fully respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Once again, we urge all the parties to display the necessary political will and to recommit to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements to ensure the earliest possible end to the conflict and help bring about peace and stability to all of Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mueller.

Ms. Mueller: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the challenging humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. Five months ago, I briefed the Council (see S/PV.8270), together with Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo. Today I regrettably advise that millions of men, women and children continue to face dire humanitarian consequences in Europe's forgotten armed conflict, and that the effects are worsening as the situation becomes more protracted.

More than 3,000 civilians have been killed and up to 9,000 have been injured since the conflict began in 2014. This crisis affects the highest proportion of elderly people — more than 30 per cent — in the world. A 400-plus kilometre contact line divides the area of hostilities. The households close to that line live in fear of shelling, sniper fire and pervasive mine contamination. People's access to basic services is constantly disrupted. There is extensive damage to homes, hospitals, schools and other critical civilian infrastructure. In 2018, more than 70 serious incidents have disrupted the vital supply of water to millions of people. Risks from communicable diseases are rising due to the water shortage, extensive damage to health facilities, lack of access to health care and extremely low immunization rates. It is imperative that parties to the conflict respect civilians and civilian objects, consistent with their obligations under international humanitarian law. Civilians are not a target.

The contact line has dramatically altered the lives of millions of civilians. People are separated from their families, services and livelihoods. In October 2017, I met people making the arduous journey at the Mayorsk checkpoint. Since then we have seen more than 1.1 million civilian crossings per month through the five official contact points. Half of the people who cross are over 60 years old. Most are women. They are regularly exposed to harm as they wait in long lines with limited facilities amid hostilities. So far 50 civilians have died or been injured while crossing this year. I welcome the efforts of the Government to improve crossing conditions, but I appeal for more to be done on both sides. Essential services at crossing points require urgent improvement, especially water and sanitation facilities. Heating points are an acute need as winter approaches. Addressing the specific needs of the elderly, especially the long-standing barriers for them to be able to easily access their pensions, remains critical.

So far this year more than 100 civilians have been killed or injured due to extensive mine and unexploded ordnance contamination. On 30 September, an explosive device killed three children and seriously injured another close to the contact line. Earlier this month, two workers were injured by a land mine when trying to restore vital water supplies to 45,000 people. For three years running, Ukraine has had the highest anti-vehicle mine casualties in the world. I implore all parties to immediately cease using mines, including in populated areas and close to civilian structures. They must respect international humanitarian law. Ukraine also requires an appropriate national mine action framework and coordination mechanisms.

Over 3.5 million people will require humanitarian assistance and protection in 2019. Yet funding for humanitarian action has steadily decreased over the years. The 2018 humanitarian response plan, which requires $187 million, is only 32 per cent funded. That is simply not enough. Without adequate funds, food, health care, water and sanitation and other life-saving assistance cannot be provided. Humanitarians can and do deliver. So far in 2018, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations have assisted more than 1 million people on both sides of the contact line. While humanitarian access is often unpredictable, particularly in the non-Government-controlled areas, today we have slightly more access than before. Since July 2018, humanitarians have rapidly scaled up their efforts to deliver essential humanitarian assistance and protection services to the people in the non-Government-controlled areas. An allocation of $6 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund was an important catalyst. I appeal to donors to increase their support for consolidating these humanitarian gains, especially with Ukraine's harsh winter fast approaching.

I would like to conclude by commending the Government of Ukraine's efforts to implement a national strategy and action plan in support of its 1.5 million internally displaced persons. I also welcome the recent adoption of the law on the legal status of missing persons. I look forward to its implementation, which should facilitate the search and identification of missing persons and provide support to family members. I reaffirm the commitment of the United Nations and its partners to supporting Ukraine's displaced and conflict-affected people across the spectrum of emergency and early recovery assistance.

I thank you once again, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the critical humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Mueller for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I thank Ms. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, as well as Ms. Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their briefings to the Security Council today.

It has been almost five years since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the beginning of its aggression in eastern Ukraine. This highly volatile situation clearly poses a threat to international peace and security, and Sweden has throughout its tenure on the Security Council worked to ensure that the Council remains seized of the matter.

The continued high levels of violence in Donbas and our deep concern about the so-called elections planned for 11 November prompted us and several other members to call for this meeting. Let me be clear about why this issue belongs in the Council. What we see is an attempt to redraw borders in Europe, backed by military power. That is a violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It also represents a violation of the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a

New Europe. This challenge to the international legal order is not a regional problem, but one with global implications. We regret that there are no signs of Russia, a member of the Council, reversing its actions to comply with international law. Again, let me be clear: Russia's aggression is the origin of the conflict, and Russia has the influence to end it whenever it so chooses.

We remain deeply concerned about the continuing violence and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. The conflict has already caused more than 10,000 deaths and affected more than 3.8 million people directly, 70 per cent of them women, elderly persons and children. Almost two thirds of the close to 2 million internally displaced persons are women. We note slight improvements in access for humanitarian organizations, but continue to emphasize the need for full and unhindered access, both in Government-controlled and non-Government-controlled areas. Sweden will continue providing principled humanitarian assistance to meet the most urgent needs of the people affected by the conflict. As we heard from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) today, the humanitarian appeal remains underfunded. We join OCHA in calling on donors to increase their contributions.

While the international community continues to support the Minsk agreements, not even the first provision in the agreements — a complete ceasefire — has been implemented. In line with consistent demands by the European Union, we call for the full implementation of the agreements, starting with an immediate and lasting ceasefire. We support the efforts made within the Normandy format to that end and commend the Government of Ukraine for recently extending the special status law for the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

The so-called elections in Donbas planned for November are, in turn, a blatant violation of the Minsk agreements. We call on Russia to assume its responsibility and use its influence to stop them from being held. The Minsk agreements clearly state that local elections should take place only after proper security conditions are put in place. That means a complete ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weapons, monitored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Russia must ensure that the armed formations controlling certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk observe the ceasefire, and is must cease all military and financial support to those formations. The Minsk agreements further stipulate that elections should be held under Ukrainian legislation and be in accordance with OSCE standards and monitored by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. We strongly support the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, which must be given full, safe and unhindered access throughout the country, including along the Russia-Ukraine State border and to the Crimean peninsula.

Finally, the ongoing militarization of Crimea and the tensions in the Sea of Azov raise additional concerns and create a very dangerous backdrop for the planned so-called elections. The redeployment of military vessels and the excessive inspections of commercial traffic in an area already affected by conflict have not gone unnoticed. By ceasing those activities, and taking steps to ensure that the Minsk agreements are finally implemented, Russia could send a signal that it is serious about reducing tensions.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine, in blatant disregard of international law and the European security order, has caused tremendous suffering and must come to an end. Until such time, the Council must remain actively seized of the matter.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Mueller for briefing the Security Council today.

The United States joins others in condemning the announcement by the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics that they intend to hold what they call elections on 11 November. Such actions are clearly illegitimate and have no basis in Ukrainian law. The sham elections, staged by Russia, run directly counter to efforts to implement the Minsk peace agreements. They also obstruct and undermine efforts to end the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, which has killed more than 10,000 people and causes more casualties daily. The Minsk agreements state that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) must supervise elections, which are to be held in accordance with Ukrainian law and OSCE standards. The 11 November balloting will satisfy none of those conditions.

The Minsk agreements also call for the disarmament of illegal groups and the withdrawal of foreign armed formations from eastern Ukraine. However, Russia is using those so-called elections to achieve the opposite.

It seeks to bolster the positions of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic. Both entities are inseparable from the illegal armed groups controlled by Moscow.

We also express our concern about the humanitarian crisis in eastern Ukraine, with 3.4 million Ukrainians requiring assistance and more than 1.5 million internally displaced. The humanitarian crisis will continue until a ceasefire is implemented and basic commitments under the Minsk agreements are met. We encourage all parties to allow affected Ukrainians to have unfettered access to humanitarian aid and Government services and to guard against further civilian losses and damage to critical infrastructure.

Beyond eastern Ukraine, Russia's occupation of the Crimean peninsula and its aggressive actions in the Sea of Azov, where Russia is harassing and obstructing international shipping bound for Ukraine's ports, further demonstrate Moscow's blatant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and its readiness to undermine regional stability. We greatly appreciate the efforts of France and Germany in the Normandy format to push for the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Unfortunately, Russia continues to impede the peace process and is, we believe, deliberately stalling in those discussions and in talks between United States Special Representative Kurt Volker and Russian Presidential Adviser Vladislav Surkov. We call on Russia to cease its obstructionist activities and artificial delays.

The United States reiterates its strong condemnation of Russia's destabilizing actions in Ukraine. We will continue to impose sanctions against Russia for its action in Donbas and Crimea until it fully implements the Minsk agreements and returns the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller, for their enlightening briefings about the ongoing tragic situation in Ukraine, which, now more than ever, requires the attention of the international community.

After more than four years of conflict in the Donbas region, fighting continues unabated. Not one day passes without a military and civilian victim or without shots, including from heavy weaponry, being fired into areas where civilians live. For more than four years, including recently at a ministerial meeting held on 11 June, France and Germany, together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have spared no effort, within the framework of the Normandy format, to bring the parties together, facilitate the implementation of the Minsk agreements and help end the conflict. My German colleague, whom I am pleased to welcome to the Chamber, and I will hold a press briefing at the end of today's meeting, as the representatives of two mediating countries of the Normandy format.

Beyond Donbas, whenever possible, France condemns the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and calls on all States Members of the United Nations to reiterate their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. In that tense environment, three recent developments in particular deserve our attention.

First, allow me to mention once again to the so-called elections planned for 11 November in the two separatist areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. Whereas we endeavour under the Normandy format to move towards the holding of local elections according to Ukrainian law and the Minsk agreements, the current initiative is a flagrant attempt to undermine the sovereignty of the Ukrainian State. It is contrary to the commitments made, in particular by Russia, when the agreements were signed. We therefore encourage all Member States to firmly and publicly condemn the organization of those illegal elections. We hope that Russia can use its influence with the separatist entities to suspend the organization of the so-called elections. Instead, it should strive to foster the right conditions for the holding of the local elections stipulated in the Minsk agreements, which is one of the keys to restoring peace. It should be noted that, for its part, Ukraine has signalled its commitment to the political component of the Minsk agreements by renewing the law on the special status of Donbas, which it adopted in September 2014.

Secondly, we deplore the lack of progress on security issues in Donbas. The ceasefire, which has been renewed several times, has not materialized in a sustainable manner on the ground. Moreover, we have recently seen an increase in the level of violence, with an average of more than 1,000 incidents per day, according to the observations of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. Similarly, the withdrawal of heavy weaponry has still not been implemented. For four years, the civilian population — including children and

the elderly, as Ms. Mueller reminded us — have been targeted practically every day by such weapons.

We are still awaiting progress — especially from Ukraine — on the three pilot disengagement areas. All commitments made must be respected; this is not a matter of pick-and-choose obligations. France cannot emphasize enough the urgent need for progress on each of the measures necessary to improve the security situation, which is essential for reaching a settlement of the conflict.

Thirdly, and finally, France expresses its deep concern about the humanitarian situation described by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. There are nearly 1.5 million displaced persons in Ukraine, while more than 700,000, on both sides of the line of contact, who are receiving humanitarian assistance. As stated in the presidential statement of 6 June (S/PRST/2018/12), the situation calls for more robust action by United Nations humanitarian agencies on the ground. To achieve that goal, France calls on all the parties to facilitate humanitarian access for United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to provide aid and assistance, not only to civilian populations but also to prisoners of war. With the harsh Donbas winter approaching, it is now more necessary than ever to relieve the suffering of the most vulnerable people.

The situation in Ukraine is not necessarily inevitable. It is up to Russia to take the decision to put an end to the illegal annexation of Crimea and use its influence over the separatist entities in Donbas to guarantee the immediate implementation of the Minsk agreements. We also encourage Ukraine to show greater political will and play its part in implementing the agreements, which should lead to the return of lasting peace.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I want to thank Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller for their comprehensive briefings.

Poland strongly supports the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. We underline the need for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all sides. It is the only way to achieve a lasting solution to the conflict in and around Ukraine. This conflict is not an ethnic, internal conflict, as Russia tries to portray it. It is a State-to-State conflict initiated by Russia and systematically fuelled by Russia with the purpose of destabilizing Ukraine.

We asked for this meeting today to condemn the announcement of the so-called elections to be held in the so-called Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic on 11 November. That announcement is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Minsk agreements; therefore, we call on the Russian Federation to make full use of its influence over the separatists to avoid any steps that would obstruct the advancement of the implementation of the Minsk agreements. It is also a setback to the efforts made in the Normandy format and by the Trilateral Contact Group. It is yet another demonstration of disregard for international norms and of efforts to undermine the achievement of peace in eastern Ukraine.

Russian aggression against Ukraine remains a source of security threats in the whole region. Reports of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) confirm that Russia is consistently strengthening its military presence in Donbas. Convoys of trucks are crossing the Russian-Ukrainian border day and night — as well as doing so where there are no border crossing facilities and always without any OSCE or Ukrainian inspection. The Special Monitoring Mission has observed such convoys on seven occasions since August alone. With little to no access in some areas, Special Monitoring Mission capabilities are crippled. On a regular basis, so-called separatists are identified as responsible for the cases of intimidation of observers and firing or jamming observation drones belonging to the Special Monitoring Mission.

It is worrisome that similar activities concerning the development of military capabilities are taking place in Crimea and the Sea of Azov. For several months, Russia has delayed hundreds of commercial vessels attempting to reach Ukrainian ports on the Sea of Azov via the Kerch Strait for extended periods and at great economic cost to Ukraine. Further militarization and increased tensions bring about even more instability to an already troubled region.

The humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine has further deteriorated since June. Fifty-one per cent of the population living in territories up to five kilometres from the contact line did not receive any support in the past 12 months, while over 60 per cent of the population has limited access to health care. The information

presented by Ms. Mueller showed that we cannot turn a blind eye to the humanitarian situation. A persisting lack of respect for the ceasefire by the illegal, Russia-supported military formations and the indiscriminate shelling of residential areas put at risk the lives of the conflict-affected population. International humanitarian law is not respected. Since the beginning of the conflict, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has recorded more than 10,000 people killed and over 24,000 injured. At least 2,500 of those killed were civilians.

With winter approaching, hundreds of thousands of people in eastern Ukraine will require additional assistance. Let me emphasize that Poland strives to deliver assistance to those in need in eastern Ukraine. In addition to supporting Ukraine at the political level, since 2014 Poland has been providing the necessary humanitarian aid to internally displaced persons from areas affected by armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, as well as the most vulnerable local population. Poland has always provided humanitarian aid via bilateral and multilateral channels. Poland contributed financially this year to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Kyiv; we appeal to Security Council members to kindly consider backing the Office as well. Furthermore, I want to thank Ms. Mueller and OCHA for the hard work, dedication and determination shown in dealing with this crisis.

On a positive note, we must underline the decision of the Supreme Council of Ukraine to extend the special status of Donetsk and Luhansk until the end of 2019, which confirms Kyiv's determination to implement the Minsk agreements, especially in the difficult pre-election period.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): Let me first thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Mueller for their briefings on the alarming situation in parts of eastern Ukraine.

In line with General Assembly resolution 68/262, adopted by an overwhelming majority on 27 March 2014, let me reiterate our full support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Let me be clear: we will not accept the redrawing of borders in Europe with the use of military force by Russia. Its actions are in direction contravention of international law and in violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

I will focus on three issues — first, elections; secondly, the humanitarian situation; and, thirdly, the security situation in the broader Black Sea region.

My first point concerns the announcement of local elections in the non-Government-controlled areas in eastern Ukraine. We condemn those illegitimate so-called elections. If held, those fake elections would contravene commitments made under the Minsk agreements and would violate Ukrainian law. In line with the Minsk agreements, local elections in certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk can take place only in accordance with Ukrainian legislation. Any such illegal elections would be incompatible with the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Further talks on a peaceful settlement should take place on the basis of the Minsk agreements. Let me recall that resolution 2202 (2015) calls on parties to fully implement the Minsk agreements. In that regard, the so-called elections are not only illegitimate, but also run counter to the letter, spirit and commitments of the Minsk agreements and are a clear setback to the peace process. The Minsk agreements remain the only viable and accepted path to peace.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands calls on the parties involved to refrain from any actions, such as the holding of so-called elections, that would obstruct the implementation of those agreements. We call on Russia to bring its considerable influence to bear to stop the so-called elections from taking place, in the interests of the peace process and of the civilians who suffer the daily consequences of the conflict. Russia must play its part by ending its financial and military support to the separatists and by withdrawing its armed forces and military equipment from Ukrainian territory.

My second point pertains to the humanitarian situation in the non-Government-controlled areas. The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has made tireless efforts to ensure that all parties respect the Minsk agreements, including the ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons. We commend the courageous work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in often dangerous circumstances.

Meanwhile, the population in the affected areas continues to suffer. In its latest report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recorded a 30 per cent increase in civilian casualties as compared to the previous reporting period. Both

landmines and unexploded ordnance remain an everyday threat to civilians in the conflict area. Civilian infrastructure has been heavily damaged. Power and water supplies are insecure. In the 6 June presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/12), the Council called for United Nations agencies to address the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. The Kingdom of the Netherlands calls on all parties to ensure that the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations can be fully operational in the non-Government-controlled areas. As Assistant Secretary-General Mueller said today, civilians are not a target.

My third point centres on the security situation in the broader Black Sea region in the wake of the Russian Federation's illegal annexation and militarization of the Crimean peninsula. The Russian military presence in the Sea of Azov increased recently. The militarization of the Sea of Azov can only destabilize the delicate security situation in the wider Black Sea region. Additionally, the Russian Federation has started inspecting commercial vessels in the Sea of Azov heading to and from Ukrainian ports. The resulting lengthy delays only add to the economic damage inflicted on south-eastern Ukraine by the illegally constructed Kerch Strait Bridge. The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes Ukraine's decision to seek arbitration under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. We hope for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. In the meantime, we call on all parties to take all the necessary measures to de-escalate military tensions in the Sea of Azov.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank the Under-Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for briefing the Security Council today.

The United Kingdom is committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We do not and will not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. The illegal seizure of Crimea by Russia in March 2014 directly contravenes the Charter of the United Nations. The action threatens international peace and security and has global consequences.

If I may, I will address the issue of the elections. Like my European and American colleagues, we see those so-called elections as illegitimate. They are the latest example in the Russian campaign to destabilize Ukraine. They are a clear breach of the Minsk agreements. And they are illegal under Ukrainian law. In plain speaking, they are a charade — and a grisly one at that. That is why the United Kingdom, with other members of the Council, called for this meeting today. The international community must stand together to condemn those illegal acts. Russia could demonstrate its commitment to the rules-based international system by using its considerable influence on the separatists to ensure that the so-called elections do not take place. To be clear: if the elections were free and fair and with proper security conditions, as stated in the Minsk agreements, that would be a different matter. But the conditions for free and fair elections will never exist as long as Russia continues to deny international access to eastern Ukraine. Support for illegitimate so-called elections is the latest attempt by Russia to destabilize Ukraine.

As other representatives have done today, I would now like to raise other recent actions that are deeply concerning.

First, as recorded by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, the increasing militarization of Crimea is nothing short of alarming. We urge Russia to desist from destabilizing transfers of weapon systems and troops and to demonstrate its commitment to regional stability.

Secondly, opening the Kerch Strait Bridge is yet another flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. Russia's systematic harassment and detention of both Ukrainian and third-country-flagged vessels in the Sea of Azov since April is yet another attempt to destabilize Ukraine and its economy.

Thirdly, we are concerned by Russia's ongoing cyberattacks on Ukraine, which attempt to interfere with Ukraine's financial, energy and Government sectors.

I will now turn to humanitarian issues. As the Assistant Secretary-General indicated in her briefing, the conflict continues to have a devastating humanitarian impact on those who live on both sides of the contact line. What we heard about mines, injuries and millions being at dire humanitarian risk ought to shock us. The lack of access to humanitarian organizations in non-Government-controlled areas is greatly contributing to the escalation of the crisis. We strongly urge the Russia-backed separatists to grant safe and unhindered access so that essential humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the 1.8 million people in need within non-Government-controlled areas. We also urge donors to respond to the United Nations annual

humanitarian response plan for Ukraine, which remains woefully underfunded.

In conclusion, we urge all sides, particularly the Russian-backed separatists, to commit to the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, beginning with a comprehensive ceasefire and the withdrawal of heavy weaponry. That is the best way to achieve stability in Ukraine and end the suffering of the Ukrainian people. To be clear: it was Russian aggression in 2014 that gave rise to this conflict — in complete disregard for international law. Russia has a responsibility, particularly as a permanent member of the Council, to desist from destabilizing behaviour and to use its considerable influence on the separatists to ensure that the Minsk agreements are implemented and the conflict brought to an end.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by thanking Ms. Rosemary A. DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ms. Ursulla Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their comprehensive and detailed briefings on the political situation in Ukraine, as well as the humanitarian situation.

The Minsk agreements remain the basis of the international community's commitment to the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Ukraine. We therefore call on the parties to the conflict to respect the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, signed in February 2015 and endorsed in resolution 2202 (2015), as the only way to achieve stability in the region.

Reducing tensions requires the cooperation and effort of the parties involved in the conflict. That is why the continued non-compliance with the ceasefire on both sides is of great concern. In that regard, we condemn and regret the assassination of Mr. Alexander Zakharchenko on 31 August and call on the parties to respect the maintenance of the ceasefire and to cooperate and assist in reducing tension.

We encourage the parties to refrain from actions that could aggravate and destabilize the situation, thereby undermining the efforts of the international community, including those of the Security Council, to seek a peaceful solution to the crisis. We remind the parties that the solution to the crisis in the region can be achieved only by peaceful means through direct, frank and inclusive negotiations, and that they should aim for a final and just solution that will help to strengthen harmonious relations among the different ethnic groups of Ukraine and between Ukraine and the countries of the region.

Of concern is the impact on the civilian population of the violence and instability of the protracted conflict, which is causing economic and human losses in the region, aggravating the suffering of the population and forcing the displacement of people from their homes. In that regard, we appreciate the work and effort of the humanitarian actors and the Office of the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs in providing humanitarian aid.

The solution to the crisis in Ukraine cannot be military but must be political. Therefore, the international community must continue to support all diplomatic efforts for a political solution to the crisis. In conclusion, we stress the need for the parties to continue to make use of established means to help resolve the conflict, such as the Normandy quartet, the Trilateral Contact Group and other key actors.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We should like to express our thanks for the convening of this meeting and for the briefings provided by Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

We wish to reiterate Peru's commitment to the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, in line with the Charter of the United Nations. At the same time, we express our concern about the complex and unstable situation in the east of the country, where the civilian population continues to suffer the consequences of the conflict. In particular, Peru shares the concern expressed by several delegations of the Council regarding the claimed intention of the self-proclaimed republics to hold elections in the territories of Luhansk and Donetsk on 11 November, which could be detrimental to the process of dialogue between the parties.

We believe that the scheduled elections contravene the provisions of the Minsk agreements and the package of measures for their implementation endorsed by the Council, which constitute the legal basis for achieving the political solution required to put an end to the conflict in eastern Ukraine. We underline that a free and fair electoral process is needed to ensure the appointment of legitimate and representative authorities. In that regard, we note that much of the population of those territories — 1.5 million internally displaced persons — have abandoned their homes, and

that those who remain — approximately 4.4 million people out of a total population of 6.5 million — are in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

We conclude by stressing the importance of the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Special Monitoring Mission, and of efforts to facilitate dialogue between the parties, in particular the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Mueller for their briefings.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States, including Ukraine, and opposes interference in Ukraine's internal affairs by any external forces. China has closely followed developments in the situation in eastern Ukraine. China hopes that all parties concerned will take concrete measures to prevent the escalation of conflict and confrontation and work together to ease tensions.

The situation in Ukraine has complex historical and contemporary factors and its handling requires comprehensive and balanced considerations.

First, the general direction of a political settlement must be upheld. On the one hand, the legitimate rights, interest and aspirations of all regions and ethnic groups in Ukraine should be fully accommodated; on the other, attention must also be paid to addressing the reasonable concerns of all relevant parties to achieve a balance among all interests.

Secondly, we continue to call for the comprehensive implementation of resolution 2202 (2015) and the Minsk II agreements, as well as the ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities in eastern Ukraine so that a comprehensive, lasting and balanced solution to the Ukrainian issue can be found through dialogue and consultation.

Thirdly, the international community must continue to promote diplomatic efforts to find a political solution to the issue. The members of the Security Council should remain united. Discussions in the Council should contribute to achieving a genuine de-escalation in the relevant regions of Ukraine and play a constructive role in achieving a political settlement. China has always maintained an objective and impartial position on the Ukrainian crisis and remains committed to playing a positive role in the political statement of the crisis.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, as well as Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for their useful briefings on the situation in eastern Ukraine.

At the outset, we renew our commitment to respecting the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, without interference in its internal affairs. We hope that all relevant stakeholders will fully implement resolution 2202 (2015) and the Minsk agreements for peace, as well as presidential statement S/PRST/2018/12 of 6 June. We hope that they will seek a comprehensive and balanced solution to this issue through dialogue, especially in line with the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, in order to achieve immediate progress on the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. We also urge both Ukraine and the Russian Federation to reach a peaceful solution to the crisis and to show greater political will not only to strengthen the ceasefire and implement previous agreements, but also to revitalize a lasting and comprehensive negotiation process.

The announcement of so-called early elections in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk on 11 November contradicts the spirit and letter of the Minsk agreements for peace, which include specific provisions on holding local elections in those areas. In that regard, any steps that could hinder progress in implementing the Minsk agreements must be avoided.

Following the briefing given by Ms. Mueller, we note that the humanitarian situation is still bad, owing to the many obstacles to the relief work and the lack of funding for the response plan. The hostilities continue in eastern Ukraine, despite a relative improvement in the situation. Shelling, light weapons and landmines still represent a deadly threat to civilians, who continue to be killed and maimed. In that regard, we stress the importance of ensuring the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all the areas affected in order to improve residents' living conditions.

In conclusion, we call for a peaceful solution to the crisis in eastern Ukraine, in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the agreements signed by the parties involved, including the Minsk agreements, which are the appropriate way to settle the

crisis in the region, along with the mediation efforts of the stakeholders who enjoy the respect and appreciation of the two parties to the conflict and the international community as a whole.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): I want to express my appreciation to Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, for their important updates.

Kazakhstan takes a balanced approach to resolving the Ukrainian crisis through peaceful negotiations, maintaining a mediation process based on key principles, international legal norms and the Charter of the United Nations. My country continues to take part in multilateral consultations on the quest for a settlement of the crisis. Kazakhstan is determined to work with all members of the Council on the issue, without resorting to political expedients and in an open, objective, responsible and constructive way.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan contributed significantly to the launch of the Normandy format and the eventual conclusion of the Minsk agreements, and has repeatedly expressed Kazakhstan's readiness to give comprehensive assistance in the process of the peaceful settlement of the situation in south-eastern Ukraine. We therefore support the efforts of the international community to resolve the conflict by political and diplomatic means, including through dialogue and confidence-building measures. We are in favour of intensifying the work of the Normandy format and increasing the effectiveness of the Trilateral Contact Group for the peaceful settlement of the situation in the south-east of Ukraine.

Kazakhstan fully endorses the activities of the Trilateral Contact Group and its working groups on implementing confidence-building measures. In that regard, we are concerned about the fact that the negotiation process to resolve the Ukrainian conflict has actually been suspended in the past few months, as evidenced by the lack of contacts in the Normandy format at higher levels. It seems that the key international participants in the Ukrainian crisis cannot devise a common plan of action. Kazakhstan, like other members of the international community, recognizes the importance of the Minsk agreements for settling the conflict in the south-east of Ukraine, and the implementation of those agreements as the only mechanism currently agreed to by the parties. We want to point out that they were endorsed by resolution 2202 (2015) of 17 February 2015, which reinforces their importance and the responsibility of the parties for strictly implementing the agreements reached, including a sustainable and long-term ceasefire, the withdrawal of heavy weapons and a resolution of political challenges.

To that end, with regard to the upcoming elections in certain areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Kazakhstan calls on all participants in the negotiation process to resolve the situation in south-eastern Ukraine and adhere to the provisions of the Minsk agreements. We have repeatedly called for strict compliance with resolution 2202 (2015) on those agreements, which we consider the only viable existing mechanism for a peaceful solution to the conflict. It is vital to preventing further escalation of the conflict and an intensified exchange of sanctions, as well as to continuing the search for peaceful ways to overcome differences.

It is especially important to our plurinational country that Ukraine remain sovereign, stable and independent, with an ethnically and religiously diverse society in which all human rights are upheld within the humanitarian space and all civilians are secure. We thank Ms. Mueller for bringing the humanitarian dimension to our attention and for her important information. We believe that sustainable peace and the full normalization of the situation can also be achieved through economic recovery. We therefore call for the establishment of confidence-building measures on the economic front as well. We should not enable tensions to escalate further, for the sake of the people who are suffering under horrible living conditions and the constant threat of renewed active warfare.

Mr. Woldegerima (Ethiopia): We thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Assistant Secretary-General Mueller for their briefings on the latest situation in eastern Ukraine.

We note the recent status report and the daily reports of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which indicate that there is a volatile security situation on the ground and an increase in the levels of violence and civilian casualties. In the recent thematic report of the Special Monitoring Mission we also noted the impact of the ongoing situation on efforts to improve the humanitarian situation. We understand

the effects of the deteriorating security situation on civilians and infrastructure and the resulting importance of responding to humanitarian needs on the ground. We believe that the implementation of the ceasefire regime agreed to by the parties is vital to de-escalating the increasing tensions and helping to address the needs of the civilian population. In that regard, we should note the recent call for restraint by Mr. Ertuğrul Apakan, Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, who also urged all sides to protect the population and deliver on their commitments to ending the violence, and especially to withdrawing weapons, disengaging, demining and adhering to the ceasefire.

There is no doubt that only a peaceful settlement can resolve the situation in eastern Ukraine. That is why it is absolutely imperative that the parties remain fully committed to the implementation of the Minsk agreements and strictly adhere to resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed the package of measures for their implementation. We can only hope that the parties will be able to make progress within the framework of the Normandy format and other relevant formats in order to tackle outstanding issues in the implementation of the Minsk agreements. As some of my colleagues have said, that is the only way to find a lasting political solution to the situation in Ukraine.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia insisted that today's meeting be held as an open briefing, because we want everybody to hear the truth. On 31 August Mr. Alexander Zakharchenko, the leader of the Donetsk People's Republic, died in a terrorist attack. His signature was on the Minsk agreements and his death has had a negative impact on the settlement of the crisis. It is clear that his murder was designed to destabilize the situation in the region. There is strong evidence to suggest that the Ukrainians were involved in his murder, and that is fully consistent with Kyiv's confessed logic of dealing with its internal crisis by force. Our Western colleagues have not expressed any views on the crime and today were too afraid to give the floor to the republics' representatives, who could have informed the Council about the progress of the investigation.

On 11 November, elections are due to be held to elect the Republics' leaders and deputies to the people's councils, owing to the need to fill the power vacuum left by Mr. Zakharchenko's murder. As far as the elections' legitimacy is concerned, they have nothing to do with the Minsk package of measures, which covers municipal elections. It is simply that people need to live and make their region habitable in the current circumstances, with a blockade by Kyiv and the Ukrainian leadership's constant threats of the use of force.

The situation in south-eastern Ukraine remains volatile. Kyiv is not adhering to the ceasefire agreements and has moved at least 15 kilometres farther into the so-called grey zone. It is obstinately refusing to fulfil its political commitments, trying to marginalize the mechanisms of the Trilateral Contact Group and launch a second round of discussions on matters that have already been agreed. Its Western partners are encouraging that, declaring, like Kurt Volker, that there is no place under the Minsk agreements for the proclaimed Donbas republics and that they should not exist. And President Poroshenko declares that there is no Minsk format. What sort of reaction are we to expect from Donbas to such rhetoric?

Today we witnessed yet another round of hypocrisy. Kyiv's total, shameless and prolonged sabotage of the Minsk agreements practically from day one has been completely ignored. Instead of admitting that fact, the discussion in the Security Council is about the elections coming up in November, which represent an essential measure considering the circumstances of Kyiv's sabotage of its political obligations, when the people of Donbas — who are Ukrainian citizens, by the way — have been abandoned by the Ukrainian authorities.

We discussed the situation in Ukraine in the Security Council at the end of May (see S/PV.8270). At the time, in this Chamber, we laid out the details, point by point, of the content of the Minsk agreements, which some people here never tire of calling on Russia to implement. Every item in the package of measures is about Ukraine and the militias, and none of them has to do with Russia. And Ukraine has not implemented a single one of them. For two years now Kyiv has refused to consolidate the Steinmeier formula that the Ukrainian President signed on to, specifying the procedure for implementing the package of measures, including the holding of elections. And yet we are constantly being told that Kyiv is allegedly implementing the agreements. References are made to the Verkhovna Rada's enactment and recent extension of a law on Donbas's special status. But has anyone here read further down the law than its title? We have repeatedly appealed to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to conduct a comparative analysis of the Minsk package and this

law, since it is completely obvious that it contradicts it. Unlike the Minsk package, the law was developed without the consent of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and the special status it creates is only temporary. Its entry into force is conditional on the implementation of other steps that violate the carefully established sequence in the Minsk agreements. The amendments to the Constitution on decentralization have been indefinitely postponed, and the amnesty law has not entered into force.

It is the European Union and the United States that are to blame for the Kyiv authorities' non-compliance with the Minsk agreements. They keep telling us that the anti-Russian sanctions will be lifted when the Minsk agreements are implemented. And as long as those currently in power in Kyiv are not implementing them, that position represents an invitation to Ukraine to continue sabotaging the Minsk agreements, since it is Russia that will have to pay for it. And Kyiv is happy to take advantage of that. The same goes for the elections. Kyiv has done nothing to implement the political parts of the Minsk package, including the election provisions, but it protests when the people of Donetsk start preparing to fill the vacuum created by Zakharchenko's murder.

A feature of our Western colleagues is that they prefer not to hear anything that does not suit them or that they do not like. That also applies to the package of measures for implementing the Minsk agreements. We urge everyone once again to read the actual document, which is an aid to understanding. Our Western colleagues were political and financial sponsors of the so-called revolution of honour, or rather, the coup d'état, something they do not like to hear. They were the guarantors of the agreement signed between Yanukovych and the opposition, which the opposition immediately violated when it seized power. They do not like to hear about that either. They prefer to go on about Russian aggression and the Russian military presence, which Alexander Hug, the Principal Deputy Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, did not observe. True, he was immediately disavowed and that part of his interview was simply deleted.

The problem is that they have given the Ukrainian authorities carte blanche. They close their eyes to everything that goes on there. They let them do and say whatever they please, and the Kyiv authorities do just that. Look at Ukraine's foreign policy or, more precisely, the lack of it. Everything that the Kyiv authorities' mouthpieces do and say in the international arena, their entire foreign policy agenda, comes down to one thing, invective and philippics directed at Russia and anti-Russian initiatives. That is it. The Roman senator Cato, with his endless call for Carthage to be destroyed, pales by comparison. But unlike us, our Western colleagues are deprived of the rare pleasure of hearing, without interruptions or translations, Ukraine's internal political discourse or, as they pompously term it, the dialogue in their politicum. To take just one quote from Verkhovna Rada deputy Oleh Barna on the leading Ukrainian TV channel:

> "Russians are not a people. They are a population without a history. They are bastards, Tatar-Mongolian mongrels. People who have always stolen from everyone."

That is word for word, and I could cite a bunch more like it.

Why am I doing this? Because everyone in Ukraine knows Russian. Approximately half of the population speaks it as if it were their first language. And in fact the ratio in favour of the Russian language is greater than that. For the Council's information, the Ukrainian authorities, including President Poroshenko, speak Russian among themselves and in their everyday life. Only on television do they speak Ukrainian. Not to mention the fact that a significant part of the population of Ukraine is Russian. Ukraine enacted a discriminatory language law that in effect has left no room for the Russian language in the educational arena. The same goes for Hungarian, by the way. Ask the Hungarians. But the scale of the damage to the Russian language is greater. That was what the Venice Commission concluded about the discriminatory nature of the law. But the Kyiv authorities are not about to change anything, they just keep stepping on the same rake. After all, the language issue was one of the main reasons for the start of the conflict in Donbas. But it is not just about that. Our Western colleagues do not want to understand, or cannot, that for the people of Donbas — and not only Donbas, believe me — living in a country where politicians like Barna are mainstream — and they are mainstream — the issue is not merely political or economic, it is existential. The people in the Crimea breathed a sigh of relief when they chose to join Russia through a voluntary referendum. If they had not, things would be worse there now than they are in Donbas.

During the so-called revolution of honour in Kyiv, the following one-word hashtag appeared: #theyarejustchildren. It meant "Why take this away from them? Just indulge them and it will pass." We have a saying similar to "Don't play with matches" — "Matches are not children's toys". Now those children are walking around Kyiv with torchlight processions and Nazi slogans and fighting in Donbas with the nationalist volunteer battalions. That is something else our Western colleagues prefer not to notice. They have let the genie out of the bottle, but now it is not that they do not want to put it back. They cannot.

The great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin wrote the following lines: "Oh, it isn't hard to deceive me. / I am happy to deceive myself."

That is about these gentlemen in the Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Bolivia.

My delegation thanks Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

We reiterate that the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk agreements continues to be the basis on which the international community is committed to pursuing a durable peace in eastern Ukraine. In that regard, we call on all parties to comply strictly with it. The provisions of these agreements, along with the development of confidence-building measures, are essential to consolidating the efforts that the parties should make in seeking a political solution to the crisis in Ukraine. In that regard, we call on the parties to comply with the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and to respect international humanitarian law.

We call on all parties to refrain from attacks and from activities that incite violence or an escalation of hostilities, to abide by the ban on the use of heavy artillery, respect the ceasefire, allow unconditional humanitarian access and facilitate full and safe access for the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) so that it can carry out its functions on the ground. In that regard, we call on the parties to address the root causes of the conflict in order to achieve a lasting solution that takes into account the rights, interests and legitimate claims of all the parties, including ethnic groups, so as to achieve a balance of interests and a political solution to the issue.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, successive violations of the ceasefire have had a devastating effect on the lives of millions of civilians. To that we have to add the attacks on urban areas and civil infrastructure that affects 60 per cent of the people living along the so-called line of contact, which is one of the areas most contaminated by anti-personnel mines. In that regard, we call on all parties to adhere strictly to their obligations regarding the protection of civilians, including resolution 2286 (2016), within a framework of respect for international humanitarian law. We also firmly support the efforts of the Special Monitoring Mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is carrying out important work in difficult circumstances.

Lastly, we reiterate that there is no military solution to this conflict. The international community and the Council must unite in making every effort possible to achieve a lasting peace that will benefit the region in the long term.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting. I also appreciate the briefers' presentations and analyses of the situation, as well as their expressed support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. My sincere thanks also go to the delegations of Sweden, France, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States for their initiative to bring to the Council's attention the issue of preparations for the holding of illegal elections to be held on 11 November in the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine.

Apparently, I am also supposed to thank the Russian delegation for the proposal to hold this meeting in the Chamber for the sake of transparency. However, as has become plainly obvious from the Russian statement, the Russian delegation is preoccupied first and foremost with using the Council as a platform to wage its disinformation campaign with regard to Ukraine and to accuse the Ukrainian Government of everything and anything that happens in the occupied territories.

Such behaviour has nothing to do with enhancing transparency, but it definitely has everything to do with desperate attempts to avoid responsibility for Russia's well-documented wrongful acts against Ukraine — its military aggression, occupation and attempted illegal annexation of Ukraine's territories. It is the behaviour of a hardened and unrepentant criminal determined to make a mockery of the justice system. I would therefore like to express my deepest disappointment over the stance of the Russian side, which appears to be hell-bent on sabotaging all genuine efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict and to bring peace to the war-torn regions of Donbas.

The main trigger for today's discussion is the intention of the Russian occupation administration in the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine to hold so-called early elections, which in reality would amount to putting the leaders of armed gangs in the seats of illegitimate representative bodies. That is nothing but a provocation and an outrage against the Minsk agreements and Ukraine's sovereignty. It is very unfortunate that the Kremlin chose the path of further escalation of the situation instead of the full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

As Ukraine's Foreign Ministry stated on 7 September, the results of those fake elections will be null and void, will not have any legal effect and will be recognized neither by Ukraine nor by the international community. Moreover, such actions only undermine the Minsk agreements and inflict serious harm on international efforts to resolve a situation that arose as a result of the Russian military aggression and occupation of parts of Ukraine's territory. The Russian Federation knows very well that those so-called elections violate the Constitution of Ukraine and Ukraine's law on interim local self-government order in certain areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions, and goes against both the letter and the spirit of the Minsk agreements, which, as the Russian Federation is fond of recalling, were endorsed by resolution 2202 (2015) in 2015.

On 4 October this year, the Ukrainian Parliament extended the validity of the aforementioned law until the end of 2019, yet again confirming Ukraine's adherence to its commitments under the Minsk agreements. Despite having more than enough time to assess the damage to the political process that those so-called elections will inflict, the Russian Federation is deliberately pushing forward with carrying out that provocation. None of us here has a crystal ball into the future, but there are indications that those so-called elections might serve as a stepping-stone towards a new cycle of Russian armed aggression. In that regard, I thank all members of the Security Council that have given their clear assessment of such actions by the Kremlin regime. Let me make it clear that only legitimately and lawfully elected officials can represent the local communities in Donbas, and not the Kremlin's puppets sent from or appointed by Moscow. Therefore, any elections that are to be recognized as such have to be conducted according to Ukrainian legislation, in line with the standards of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and under proper international monitoring.

Since the scope of today's discussion was broadened by the Russian Federation with its sweeping assessments, unequivocal characterizations and historical overview, I wish to highlight the following points with regard to a much larger picture of Russia's destructive activities in and around Ukraine. By the way, I was somewhat surprised by the tone of the representative of the Russian Federation, which is becoming more and more undiplomatic, if not vulgar, with every successive Security Council meeting on Ukraine.

We have all heard on numerous occasions the Russian mantra, which has also been repeated today, that the Ukrainian Government should engage directly with representatives of Luhansk and Donetsk. A very inconvenient truth for the Russian side lies in the fact that there are no legitimate representatives of Luhansk and Donetsk, freely elected by the people. The persons sitting in the administrative buildings in Luhansk and Donetsk are simply Moscow's puppets, who are installed or removed from their positions at the whim of their Kremlin masters. The presence of Russian citizens and security personnel in those administrations, in addition to the provision of crucial financial and military support, continues to this day and remains a decisive factor in running the day-to-day governance in the occupied areas of Donbas. Russia continues to exercise full political and administrative control over the region. Moscow has created and supported the illegal armed formations in Donetsk and Luhansk. Their very existence would be impossible without Russia's direct financial aid, which amounts to $1.3 billion per year. The Russian armed forces exercise full command and control over military formations in the occupied areas of Ukraine.

Here are just a few facts from the latest reports of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (SMM), since the Russian representative mentioned the interview with Mr. Hug. In August, its unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) detected convoys of cargo trucks illegally crossing at night the segment of the Ukrainian-Russian State border currently controlled by the Russian side. The convoy then drove to the town of Khrustalny, a well-known storage facility for Russian heavy weapons. Later, in the same village, the SMM spotted hundreds of ammunition crates, some of which were assessed to be brand new, as well as 118 crates of multiple-launch rocket-system rockets. According to reports of the SMM, its monitors also identified four distinct electronic warfare systems near a non-Government-controlled village. Do I have to say that those systems are employed exclusively by the Russian army? In September, the SMM reported a convoy of 10 Kamaz canvas-covered cargo trucks near the border with the Russian Federation where there are no border crossing facilities. On three occasions, from 9 to 12 October, an SMM UAV spotted vehicles, including an anti-aircraft gun and an armoured personnel carrier, entering and exiting Ukraine in the middle of the night via an unpaved road near another village in a non-Government-controlled area of the Donetsk region, near the border with the Russian Federation.

In a final stroke, on 27 October an SMM UAV spotted, in non-Government-controlled territories, a surface-to-air missile system known in Russian as *Osa*, which means "wasp" and English, and subsequently a convoy of seven trucks on a dirt road near the border with the Russian Federation. The UAV then experienced signal interference, which was determined to be caused by jamming, after which all communication with it was lost. The UAV did not return to its ground-control station and is considered lost. Maybe, as Russia often claims, that should be attributed to peaceful retired local coal miners, or maybe to the Russian military officers who decided to spend their vacation time picking mushrooms in the nearby forest.

In just the past three months, the SMM has observed convoys, including trucks, on seven occasions on the same aforementioned unpaved road in the area near the border. We are just talking about one small area near the border with the Russian Federation. Does anyone have any doubt as to who is in charge there? Does anyone believe the Russian narrative that there are independent authorities in Luhansk and Donetsk, and that Moscow is merely playing the role of mediator? Really?

If anyone thinks that the only flash point in Ukraine-Russian relations is in Donbas, they would be gravely mistaken. Let us have a look at the Sea of Azov, which has been turned into another theatre of belligerent Russian actions against Ukraine. In the past six months, the Russian Federation has stopped, in an abusive manner, over 200 vessels bound for the Ukrainian ports of Mariupol and Berdyansk. As confirmed by the SMM, those interruptions to commercial shipping have caused economic and trade disruptions resulting in commercial losses for the ports, which employ thousands of people. Such actions are inconsistent with Russia's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and breach the navigational rights of Ukraine and of the flag States of the stopped vessels. Vessels bound for Russian ports in the Sea of Azov have not been subjected to similar disruptive stoppages.

Then there is the Kerch Strait Bridge, built unlawfully and unilaterally in violation of Ukraine's rights. It has become a major hindrance to international navigation. The bridge is only 35 metres high, and only vessels with an air draft of less than 33 metres and a length of less than 160 metres may safely pass under it. As a result, panamax vessels and many handymax vessels are now prevented from transiting the Kerch Strait. That has had a major impact on traffic to Ukraine's ports.

Russia also uses the Sea of Azov as an additional channel to supply its forces in Donbas with weapons from the occupied territory of Crimea. According to our information, Russia has not given up on the idea of having a land corridor to Crimea. Furthermore, the threat of a maritime assault from the Azov direction in the case of a large-scale military confrontation remains a source of security destabilization in the Donetsk region. In the occupied Crimea, active militarization proceeds at full speed. Russia has more than doubled the strength of its military on the peninsula and continues to prepare Crimean military infrastructure for the deployment of nuclear weapons. That includes refurbishing Soviet-era nuclear warhead storage facilities.

The human rights situation on the peninsula also remains highly alarming. The findings of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights confirm the continuing failure of the Russian

Federation authorities, as the occupying power, to adequately guarantee and protect a wide range of human rights in Crimea. Russia keeps ignoring the order of the International Court of Justice, issued one year ago, that requires, among other things, for Russia to refrain from maintaining or imposing limitations on the ability of the Crimean Tatar community to preserve its representative institutions, including the Mejlis, as well as to ensure the availability of education in the Ukrainian language. Despite the clear meaning of that order, an entire year has passed in which Russia has continued its ban on the Mejlis and the number of students studying in the Ukrainian language dropped from more than 13,000 in the 2013-2014 academic year to just 172 in the 2017-2018 academic year. Let us take a moment and think of those numbers — more than 13,000 and 172. It is a great difference.

I would add to that the fact that during the period from 2014 to 2017, 108,000 people moved from the Russian Federation to Crimea and Sevastopol. What is that if not a deliberate policy to change the demographic composition of the region? Over 70 Ukrainian citizens have been detained in Russia and the occupied Crimea by Russian authorities under trumped-up, politically motivated charges. Oleg Sentsov, facing the threat of torture by force-feeding, had to terminate his hunger strike after a four-month struggle. His health has deteriorated dramatically and his condition remains critical. The recent decision of the European Parliament to award the Sakharov Prize to Oleg Sentsov is a powerful signal to all those illegally detained that they are not forgotten. The health conditions of Volodymyr Balukh, Asan Chapuch, Emir-Usein Kuku, Stanislav Klykh, Ihor Hryb, Yevhen Panov and many others who do not receive appropriate medical assistance remains of great concern.

I have behind me today Ms. Emine Dzhaparova, First Deputy Minister of Information Policy of Ukraine. She is a Crimean Tatar; she was born there. She lived and worked in Crimea and she had to leave after the Russian occupation. And she can tell a thousand stories about what is happening in the current reality of Crimea.

That whole bleak picture would be incomplete without mentioning the massive campaign of propaganda and incitement of hatred against Ukraine and Ukrainians launched by the Russian Government. Russian State-owned media and public figures spend hours on prime-time television to promote insinuations about the Ukrainian people. That has already played a significant role in the occupation of Crimea and in fuelling the conflict in Donbas.

What is to be made of all this? It is both quite simple and extremely difficult at the same time. The keys to the resolution of the conflict lie in Moscow. On our part, we are ready for constructive engagement to end the conflict. Alas, such readiness is not yet present in Russia. As regrettable as it may be, until there is a tangible change in Russian policy towards building genuine neighbourly relations with countries around its borders, based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, instead of creating areas of instability and waging wars, the Council will continue to gather around this table to discuss the never-ending follies of Russia's expansionist and aggressive policies. One thing is for sure — appeasing the Kremlin and playing along will not contribute to building a more stable and safer world.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.